



UNITED STATES ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AGENCY
REGION IX
75 Hawthorne Street
San Francisco, CA 94105

October 31, 2005

Mr. Bernard Weingardt
Regional Forester
Pacific Southwest Region
US Forest Service
1323 Club Drive
Vallejo, CA 94592

Subject: Final Environmental Impact Statement for Southern California
Forest Plan Revisions: Angeles, San Bernardino, Cleveland, and
Los Padres National Forests (CEQ # 20050393)

Dear Mr. Weingardt:

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the above-referenced document pursuant to the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations (40 CFR Parts 1500-1508), and Section 309 of the Clean Air Act.

EPA reviewed the Draft Environmental Impact Statement (DEIS) and rated the document Environmental Concerns - Insufficient Information (EC-2). Our primary concerns were avoidable impacts to sensitive resources, water quality and quantity, and air quality; integration of fire use as a management tool; and the feasibility and sources of adequate management and monitoring funding.

The Forest Service has selected Alternative 4a which accommodates moderate growth in recreation while minimizing effects on existing facilities and environmental resources. This alternative is based on expansion of existing facilities and maintenance of healthy forests, protection of communities, managed and sustainable recreational uses, and conservation of threatened and endangered species habitat. Many of our concerns have been addressed with the selection of this modified alternative, the designation of additional Research Natural Areas, more restricted motorized use on back country roads, and the decommissioning of unclassified roads. The Forest Service has also been responsive to our concerns in their detailed response to comments.

Thank you for the opportunity to review this FEIS. When the Record of Decision is signed, please send one copy to the address above (mail code: CED-2). If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me or Laura Fujii, the lead reviewer for this project. Laura can be reached at 415-972-3852 or fujii.laura@epa.gov.

Sincerely,

/s/

Duane James, Manager
Environmental Review Office
Communities and Ecosystems Division

cc: Forest Supervisor, Los Padres National Forest
Forest Supervisor, Angeles National Forest
Forest Supervisor, San Bernardino National Forest
Ron Pugh, Program Leader, Cleveland National Forest

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bc: Larry Biland, AIR-7

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FEIS Southern California Forest Management Plan Revisions: Angeles, Cleveland, Los padres, San Bernardino NF), 10/25/05

Summary Paragraph

EPA's concerns have been adequately addressed with the selection of modified alternative 4a, the designation of additional Research Natural Areas, more restricted motorized use on back country roads, the decommissioning of unclassified roads, inclusion of requested information, and Forest Service response to comments.

Success Story

The Selected alternative places less emphasis on recreational development with a decision to focus on accommodation of 5% of new recreational demand while minimizing and addressing adverse environmental effects. The Selected Alternative is more protective: 1) restricting motorized use on an additional 429 miles of roads, 2) designating additional Resource Natural Areas (RNAs)(7590 additional acres of unique resources protected), 3) committing to evaluation and potential designation of other RNAs (potential protection of 10,484 acres of unique resources), 4) shifting road maintenance responsibility to primary users who may be able to better fund maintenance of key fire suppression roads, 5) decommissioning of unneeded unclassified roads in non-motorized land use zones (up to 447 miles), and 6) an additional 114,412 acres of Riparian Conservation Areas in land use zones with fewer allowable uses.